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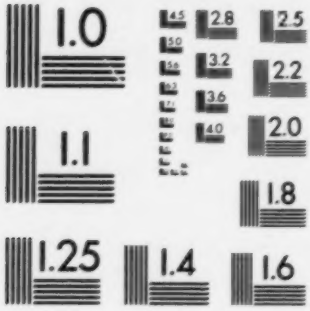

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HOME-BASED BUSINESS

EXHIBITOR'S HANDBOOK FOR TRADE SHOWS, EXHIBITIONS AND FAIRS

Province of British Columbia
Ministry of Regional and Economic Development
HONOURABLE STANLEY B. HAGEN, MINISTER

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TRADE SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS AS A MARKETING TOOL

Home-based businesses are growing at a rapid pace. By the year 2000, it is estimated that forty percent of the labour force will be operating from a home-based setting. Whether you operate your business from your home or some other location, one factor remains: competition. To be successful, entrepreneurs must learn how to market their goods and services in a competitive marketplace.

One effective way to market your products and services is to participate in trade shows and exhibitions. They provide an opportunity to meet face-to-face with potential clients in a marketplace of serious buyers. In fact, the Trade Show Bureau in the United States has found that it takes on average only one call to convert a trade show lead into a sale, compared to five calls using the cold call approach. And often deals are made right at the trade show.

This handbook outlines how trade shows, craft fairs and exhibitions can work for you. It offers a step-by-step planning guide and much more information that will help make your participation in these events successful.

I wish you much success in your endeavours.

Honourable Stanley B. Hagen
Minister of Regional and
Economic Development

EXHIBITOR'S HANDBOOK FOR TRADE SHOWS, EXHIBITIONS AND FAIRS

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CHAPTER 1: THE TRADE SHOW AS A MARKET PLACE

There are many varieties of trade shows from huge national exhibitions attracting tens of thousands of attendees and hundreds of exhibitors to local and regional events where the atmosphere is more relaxed and certainly less expensive from the point of view of the exhibitor. Show sponsors range from craft associations to commercial promoters to charitable or local business organizations. In recent years both provincial and federal governments have taken a major role in promotion and support of trade shows and exhibitions. This type of marketing is flourishing in Canada as never before.

Shows may be held indoors or out, on fair grounds and in exhibition halls or shopping malls. They may be open to the public with a definite retail flavour or they may be restricted to pre-screened participants where you can expect a greater number of seriously interested contacts than if the general public attends. Research indicates that at a wholesale trade show 20% of the contacts will bring in quality sales or leads, with half of those leads resulting in orders within three months after the show.

Whether attended by the retail or wholesale shopper, trade shows provide a neutral ground where buyers can see competitors side by side and do some comparison shopping for ideas, services and products. These events can accelerate the selling process, permitting a sales team to do in a few days or a week what would normally take several months in the field.

If you have developed a quality product or service with a mind to current tastes and trends, you should be able to stand up well in this ideal selling environment. The average serious trade show prospect can spend up to eight hours on the site in a day. Get their attention with a well planned exhibit and a pleasant, informed booth staff, and your goals are well on their way to being achieved.

This trade show handbook is designed to help make your exhibiting experience a success. While much of the information will assist you to improve exhibiting skills at any level of participation, it is aimed primarily at those who choose to use such a marketing opportunity as a serious bid to expand their base of operations into a vigorous full time business.

A. WHERE TO START

As with most things, a little research in the beginning can save a lot of time and money further down the line. Having made up your mind that this is one marketing tool you would like to pursue, it's time to make some phone calls to colleagues and friendly competitors, consult with your public librarian and talk to the Business Information Officer at your Chamber of Commerce.

Trade magazines in your library cover most industries, and other publications list conventions and exhibit schedules all over North America. If you live near or in a large city, your visitor and convention centre will probably have a list of all trade shows booked for that city for a year in advance. The Enterprise Centre in Vancouver has listings for most of the major trade shows taking place in British Columbia.

Check out what trade shows you could consider locally or regionally, whether the theme is suitable to justify the cost of participation, and the previous track record of the event. Most people are willing to share their experiences with you and you can learn a great deal from these contacts.

If the show you are considering is a repeat, try to get an information package or a report from an earlier one. Look at the attendance figures, educational seminars and demonstrations offered, and the success of the show in dollars and cents. Even if you don't know them personally, a call to one or more of the participants may be helpful to get their insights on how the show worked for them.

If you have never exhibited at any show, it may be useful to attend one or more as a visitor to get a feel for how they are run. If you can even attend the show in which you are considering participation, you will be able to think seriously about how your product or service would measure up to the competition both in terms of quality and price.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Established shows already have a following and are generally more profitable for the exhibitor.
- Advertising in various types of media plays a significant role in the success of a show. What kind of advertising and publicity campaign does the show management follow? Is there a show program or catalogue published with names, addresses and a brief description of each exhibitor's business?
- A successful show generally attracts previous participants back again. Is there a completely different group from one year to the next? If so, the trade show may not be working too well.
- Good attendance usually equals good sales; however, you should be cautious of events where the exhibitors are only a part of a much larger promotion. Regardless of attendance figures, you can count on becoming only a side show attraction for most people there.
- While demonstrations are a proven and worthwhile aspect of trade show participation, it is important not to let them become an entertainment which attracts curious crowds of onlookers but discourages serious buyers.
  - Personal attention is still the path to sales success and you can rarely offer that while demonstrating, especially to a large audience.
  - Scheduling demonstrations throughout the day will allow you to see what happens in your case: check their direct effectiveness by keeping track of when big sales are made and by asking customers at any time whether they saw your demonstration and if that helped them to make a decision to buy.
- Some kind of screening process encourages a higher quality of appropriate participants in the show. For example, at many arts and craft shows there is a jury process to select participants (see Appendix A. Preparing for Jury Selection). Another positive form of screening is to limit the number of exhibitors selling similar products or offering similar services.

- Travelling time to distant shows must be measured in lost production and sales. But it is possible to justify the money spent on travel, food and lodging if you are able to call on other clients along the way or near the show site.

B. PREPARING A TRADE SHOW MARKETING PLAN

SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Current research indicates that nearly half the businesses participating in trade shows have no stated objectives for being there other than thinking it was something they should do. You are at that stage now. Your initial research will have sparked your interest in a certain upcoming show, so it is time to contact the exhibit manager and ask for an exhibit package. This will include a planning guide and rental prices on various items which will allow you to realistically look at your possible participation in this event. While you are waiting for this material to arrive, you should take two or three hours to draft an overall plan relating to your business's specific requirements.

Set your goals high, but not out of sight. While it is important to view trade show exposure as an advertising opportunity for your business and your product, this must never overshadow the primary purpose of being there: to sell the product. In themselves, trade shows are an expensive form of advertising, but an inexpensive way of selling. They are also an opportunity to do an effective market survey of one specialized area of the market you are servicing. If you take advantage of the concentration of visitors to the show, you can, in a few short days, gauge their reaction to your product line or service and hear what they have to say about your prices.

Here are some goal suggestions, there are many others which might apply to your particular business:

- To sell a certain dollar volume at the show itself.
- To make strong contacts for follow-up sales.
- To introduce a new product or service and see how it is received by a knowledgeable and critical audience.
- To demonstrate products or techniques of a non-portable nature, which you could not normally take to a customer if you were visiting his home territory.
- To develop new market areas outside your normal selling territory.
- To line up distributorships, dealerships or sales representatives for your product.
- To introduce a new business image.
- To network with competitors, pick up display and selling ideas and compare notes on suppliers, other profitable shows and fairs, and reliable outlets for your goods.

Can you produce enough volume throughout the year at a consistent level of quality to warrant selling at a trade show?

At wholesale trade shows you will usually sell "production reservations" for bulk orders over a period of months. At retail shows, where the general public is a key factor, you must have enough product to sell throughout the life of the show as well as be prepared to take individual orders which will have to be filled quickly.

If and when orders do pour in, either from a show or from other contacts, smart marketers will have a strategy in place to handle this immediate increase in production:

- Are there individuals you can count on to work out of their homes on short notice (cottage industry-style)?
- Is there a shelter or workshop for the handicapped where organization and management are already in place to allow for quick action?
- What other contingency plans such as the need for packaging and delivery do you have in order to cope with instant success?

PLANNING

With your Exhibitor's Package and Planning Guide in hand, it is now time to look at how you would approach the specific trade show you have in mind. But don't plan in a vacuum! If you think there might be a problem with presentation of some of the ideas you have, contact the exhibit management and discuss your proposals before you give any more time to planning for them.

It is a well known fact that people who live some distance away from the exhibit site tend to plan better for their participation than those who live in the same community as the upcoming show. Don't think in terms of being able to correct mistakes, call for extra help or dash back to the shop for some more props just because you are in easy commuting distance. Always plan as though you lived 100 miles away!

Points To Consider:

- What is the mix of those attending the show? Are you catering to a wholesale or retail audience?
- What volume of visitors is expected?
- What type of handout materials will you need:
  - Business cards?
  - Brochures?
  - Previous publicity articles?
- What products and how many of each will you need to prepare for sale? A broad range of products and prices should be represented.
- Is the entry fee a set amount or a percentage of sales or a combination of these?
- What theme does the show have and how can you tie your product lines into it?

- Who pays for signage at the booth? Is it keyed to certain colours or graphic schemes?
- How should you plan for staffing? Be realistic here! Exhibit work is very taxing both mentally and physically. Staff should not be expected to be on duty without a break for more than three or four hours.
- What seminars and educational events do you want to attend or have your staff attend?
- What demonstrations can you mount? What props and expertise do you need in relation to the size and shape of the expected booth?
- What officially designated services are you required to use, such as a booth set-up team, certain shipping and handling companies or any other services listed in the Exhibitor's Kit?
- Does this trade show make awards (with or without prize money) in different categories such as best show product, best new design or best booth display? If so, plan with this in mind and display your products accordingly. Winning in any category can be used as a big part of your promotion and publicity during the next year.
- If you are exhibiting outside your own immediate territory, you must familiarize yourself with rules that may apply elsewhere:
  - Do you need a licence to sell?
  - How are you required to collect and report on sales tax if it is a retail event?
  - Are there product and labelling restrictions?
  - Are there regional regulations or laws regarding damage or injury which would require you to consider extra insurance coverage?
- Are there certain locations which would be preferable for your booth? (Near the refreshment stand is guaranteed to be among the heaviest traffic areas!) A request for a favoured location may mean either a higher rental fee or an early reservation — probably both.

CREATING AN IMAGE

When you think of a Cadillac, a Chevette and a Firebird, do you think of all three owners as being the same type of person? Chances are you can imagine the owners of these cars buying certain products or services appropriate to the image their particular car suggests in the North American mind.

Everything you do, say and display should be consistent with the image you wish to project. That may be rough and rustic, traditional, space age/futuristic, expensive, flashy, environmentally friendly, etc.

Do not mix the message to your clients by using inappropriate combinations of display materials or promotional ideas. You will only confuse them and arouse suspicions that you are not what they think you should be and, therefore, not reliable.

CHAPTER 2: SUCCESS THROUGH PRACTICAL PLANNING

A. THE BUDGET PROCESS

Effective budgeting and control of expenses will play a key role in the success of your trade show participation. While it is not possible to foresee every item, you will have a very good idea of the amount of money this trade show will cost you by the time you finish this step. Bear in mind that whether you are developing a total booth design, basic signage, graphics or some small display units, you will be able to use them again.

If you are new at this business of trade shows, you will soon discover that booth development is the major expense of your participation. It might be wise to consider rental of either a modular or custom exhibit booth through the trade show organization. This will save many headaches associated with installation, transportation or removing the exhibit.

All costs associated with show participation are tax deductible business expenses. However, it is necessary to keep accurate records, perhaps assigning a small notebook in which you can record expenses as they occur and a large envelope for all receipts.

EXHIBITOR'S KIT

This is your guide to the show's rules. It usually comes complete with information on compulsory and optional on-site services. There may be things you are not allowed to do yourself even if it would save you money to do so.

Read through the kit carefully to avoid nasty surprises at set-up time! There may also be restrictions on booth height or what you can use or do in the booth. In some cases you are not even permitted to pin materials to the curtains at the back of the booth or the drapes around the display tables.

If the show management offers exhibitor meetings in advance of the trade show, try to attend at least one. This will allow you to ask questions and learn a great deal that will save you time during set-up of your exhibit.

Here are some of the optional services you are most likely to encounter:

- Booth cleaning, booth carpeting, and extra security.
- Plants and flowers, photography, custom signage, and extra furniture not included in the basic rental.
- Audio/visual equipment and operation, and telephone service.
- Extra electrical service.

ESTIMATED BUDGET

By using your Exhibitor's Kit as a guide and doing some basic research, you should be able to come up with a ball park budget. The show management or building facility usually provides a basic on-site insurance package, but you may need additional coverage during travelling as well as at the show. Leave space to enter the actual expenses in each category after the show is over. It will be helpful information in planning your next event.

Item	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Booth space rental		
Display booth structure (either to rent or build)		
Signage (signs and artwork)		
Transportation (both ways)		
▪ insurance during transit		
▪ display booth		
▪ signage		
▪ demonstration products		
▪ promotional materials		
Services at the Site		
▪ booth set-up		
▪ electrical connection		
▪ lighting, curtains, carpets		
▪ any optional services		
Business promotion		
▪ notices/invitations to customers and contacts		
▪ brochures, business cards		
▪ advertising, publicity		
▪ giveaways, prize promotions		
▪ demonstration materials		
Personal Expenses (all staff)		
▪ travel		
▪ lodging		
▪ food		
Shoplifting (allow 10% for losses at a retail exhibit, 5% at wholesale)		
Unforeseen expenses (add 10%)		

B. GETTING READY FOR THE SHOW

EXHIBITION APPLICATION AND BOOKINGS

If the cost and organizational prospects of participation have not discouraged you, you will now be ready to send in your application form, order forms provided in the exhibitor's kit for various special requests, and your deposit.

Now that you are committed, it's time for action in a number of areas where early planning will be to your advantage:

- Book accommodation and travel early. There may be a great many people attending your trade show or coming to competing events in the same city. Check for accommodation discounts if you book as a participant in the trade show.
- Arrange to have the best people as staff for your booth, it could be worth big money. Start thinking about it now and approach these people as soon as possible.
- Check all the supplies you will need for the show:
  - brochures and business cards (which you may have to develop from scratch),
  - order forms,
  - production schedule booking forms,
  - price lists (keep wholesale and retail separate),
  - name labelled bags or boxes.
- Print invitations (some shows provide invitations as part of their package) and promotional releases for early mailing.
- Write a descriptive listing if this is required by show management, and send it in as soon as possible.
- Decide what you would like to exhibit. Do you have the products on hand? If not, start work on them right away.

PREPARING A PORTFOLIO

For many home-based businesses, a well prepared portfolio is the best portable publicity tool to display the full range of your work at home, on the street or at a show. It should be up-to-date at all times, attractively illustrating your business and your product in written and visual form. Employ the best possible photography and lettering to do so. If necessary, hire someone to help you out. Demonstrated professionalism in your portfolio can make all the difference to future sales.

If you are using any people who will be recognizable in your promotional photography, it is important to obtain a "model release", preferably signed at the time the picture is taken.

Commonly used by professional photographers, this form gives permission for your business to use a particular photo for advertising and other commercial purposes. A parent or guardian may sign for a child.

Here are some suggestions for the layout of a good portfolio which may take the form of a large photo album or a three-ring binder. Remember that your portfolio will be handled a great deal so it should be selected for durability as well as for appearance:

- The title page should present the name and specialty only, carefully lettered and spaced.
- Page two should feature a short biography, a list of shows, commissions or awards, as applicable to your particular business. This will establish your credibility in the field.
- If you have a flattering article or newspaper feature on your work, it may appear on the following page. What others have said about you is more convincing than what you say about yourself.
- Only one item should be presented on each page, but it is a good idea to have several photographs of that item, perhaps taken from different angles or in close-up to capture a particular detail.
- Captions or comments should not be required. A well presented product will speak for itself.

ASSEMBLING A PORTABLE PRODUCT PRESENTATION

A small booth will put severe restrictions on the number of items you can put on show and the size of the demonstration illustrating what you are capable of producing. Therefore, it is important to have a sample in each category to display, together with a clearly designed card or tag providing descriptive information to make it easy for prospective buyers to work out a lot of the options for themselves. Your time will be consumed needlessly if they must ask you or one of your sales staff about every detail.

Here are some suggestions for information that might work for your display products. Prepare each card or tag in advance, bring them to the show with your shipping crates on set-up day, and include:

- name and stock number of each item,
- available sizes,
- materials or processes used,
- alternative materials, colours, finishes or design variations,
- prices,
- minimum size of order or special volume discounts (of interest to wholesalers only).

RETAIL PRICING POLICY

Since wholesale prices are usually 50% of retail, many exhibitors are tempted to cut the retail price of their products when selling through a trade show or fair. Think carefully before doing so as it may prove to be a poor idea for a number of reasons:

- The costs for you and your helpers preparing for and attending the show are part of the reason why you have a retail markup.
- Time spent at the show is lost production time to you.

- You will antagonize retail outlets to whom you are selling or would like to sell in quantity if you undercut the normal retail markup in the same geographical area.
- You will antagonize wholesalers who recognize that your lack of a reliable pricing policy will make it difficult for them to offer your product to retailers.
- Word will spread at the show that you are willing to compromise on price or that you will cut prices on the last day to move your merchandise. You will find that customers will not pay your full retail prices any more, or they will routinely wait until the last day before getting serious about purchasing from your booth.

Cutting retail prices at shows can lead to a disaster in terms of overall sales and a good deal of ill will all round.

WHOLESALE PRICING POLICY

Retail price lists and wholesale price lists should be kept separate from each other. Your wholesale price list should be geared to volume buyers who will be expecting a substantial discount from your retail prices. You may consider offering further discounts to wholesale or other large buyers as a special show promotion, but make it clear that these discounted prices will only be in effect for the life of the show. Your price list should also indicate the extra charges associated with rush orders.

Your wholesale price list should specify that the prices do not include shipping costs. Most large buyers expect to pay extra for the shipping because each buyer lives at different distances from your workshop. You should have available a separate listing of various sample shipping expenses from your town to major centres. Different communities are serviced most efficiently by different types of transportation and it is to your advantage to be informed on the most efficient and least expensive methods by which products may leave or arrive at your destination.

Payment options should be clearly specified, indicating the types of discounts available to encourage fast payment, and the penalties associated with overdue accounts. Typical terms of payment and penalties include:

- A 5% discount on prepaid orders.
- A 2% discount if the account is settled within 10 days of receiving the invoice.
- A penalty interest rate of 2% on all accounts which are in arrears after 30 days.

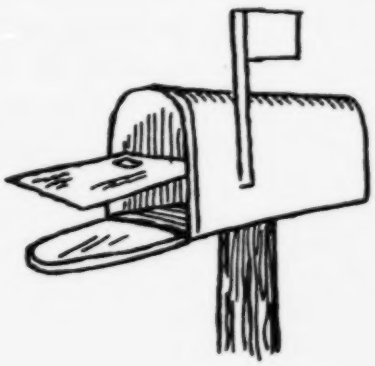
C. PRE-SHOW ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

If you want people to come to your party, you have to let them know you are having one. Some of your best prospects will be those who already know about your exhibit in advance and, therefore, make a deliberate attempt to search you out at the trade show.

EXISTING CLIENTS

Pull out your mailing list and send invitations to appropriate clients. Remember that some shows have a restricted audience and will allow entry only to those types of buyers to which the show caters:

- Announce your participation in the trade show and suggest reasons for them to visit you there:
  - unveiling new product lines,
  - demonstrations or promotions,
  - discounts for large purchases.
- Offer them VIP appointments, suggesting times when the exhibit floor is not likely to be at its busiest.
- Offer a "preferred status" discount on orders placed during the trade show.



Follow your letter up with a phone call several weeks before the show to see if they plan to attend and if they would like an appointment.

PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS

These may be customers you have already approached but who have never bought from you before, or they may be customers whom you know about and would like to make an effort to add to your clientele:

- Send them a brochure, a business card and, if you have one, a copy of an article which has appeared in the media highlighting your product, together with an invitation letter indicating that you would like to get to know them better at the trade show.
- Offer them VIP appointments, the same as current clients.

If the show is oriented toward wholesalers, there may be pre-registered attendees to whom you could do a direct mail, or you may wish to consider mailing an invitation and brochure to those who attended this trade show the last time it was held. In appropriate cases, follow up with a phone call, as with current clients.

GENERAL PUBLICITY

Without spending a lot of time on this, it is possible to reach a large audience of potential clients through a few well placed advertisements and news releases:

- If the show is in a relatively small community, write a news release and photo package for the local newspaper.
- Send a news release announcing your participation in the trade show to appropriate trade journals.
- Try to get a descriptive listing for your booth included in special show guides which appear in many trade magazines.

Be sure to highlight any new product lines or specific reasons why someone should visit your exhibit. If you have a booth number assigned, be sure to include that in your publicity as it may be quite difficult to locate you if the show is large.

RAISING YOUR EXHIBIT BOOTH PROFILE

If the show is small and the number of expected attendees and exhibitors quite limited, you can expect that everyone will pass by or through your booth during the show. However, if it is a large show with lots of competition, consider ways to make people aware of your presence there.

If you are outside the main traffic areas, you will need to give some thought to your specific situation in advance. Possible ways of overcoming its limitations include:

- Preparing a simple promotional flyer with a diagram highlighting your booth and getting one of your sales staff to walk through the area handing them out?
- If show management will not permit that, it may be more appropriate to hire a host or hostess during peak traffic times to go out and promote your booth.
- You may be permitted to plan a prize promotion or an interesting demonstration and bill it as an attraction with a similar flyer handout.

CHAPTER 3: THE EXHIBIT BOOTH AND SUPPLIES

An exhibit must have a sense of unity, linking the display, demonstration and backdrops together in a harmonious manner. Choice of colours, fabrics, carpets and signs create this unity.

Your trade show location should be looked on as a shell, a backdrop for graphics, products and people. There is a great temptation, even amongst veteran exhibitors, to concentrate on planning for the physical aspect of the exhibit booth as an end in itself.

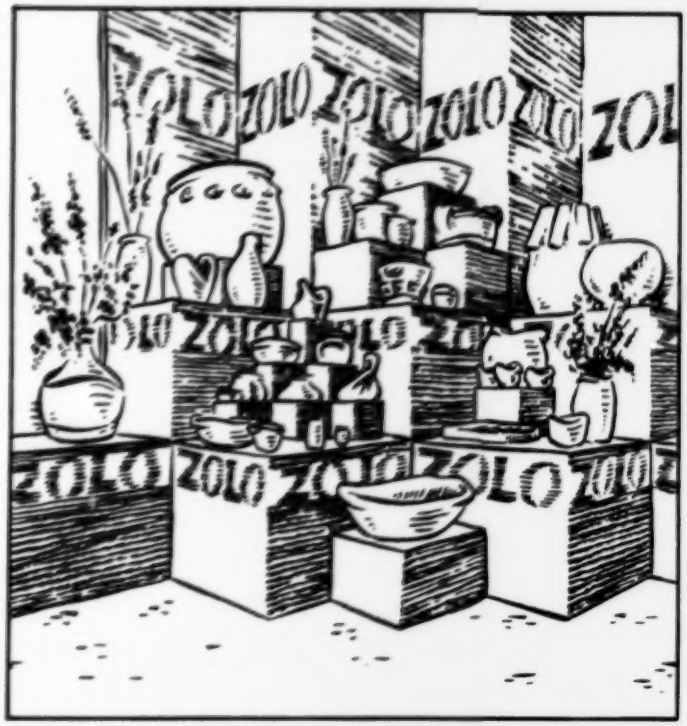
Developing, moving, setting up, operating and tearing down your exhibit should all be viewed in the context of selling the product. If an idea you are considering does nothing to enhance the product, don't spend time on it. If you have to wear yourself out wrestling with a complex exhibit when something simpler would achieve the same results with less effort, save your stamina for selling the product. YOU WILL NEED IT!

A. PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL EXHIBIT BOOTH

BOOTH OPTIONS

Many people are dismayed to discover how little they are renting when it comes to the basic booth unit. While it is most often a small three-sided model with a curtained back wall, two lower curtained side panels, a light socket and one or two pieces of furniture, there are other options:

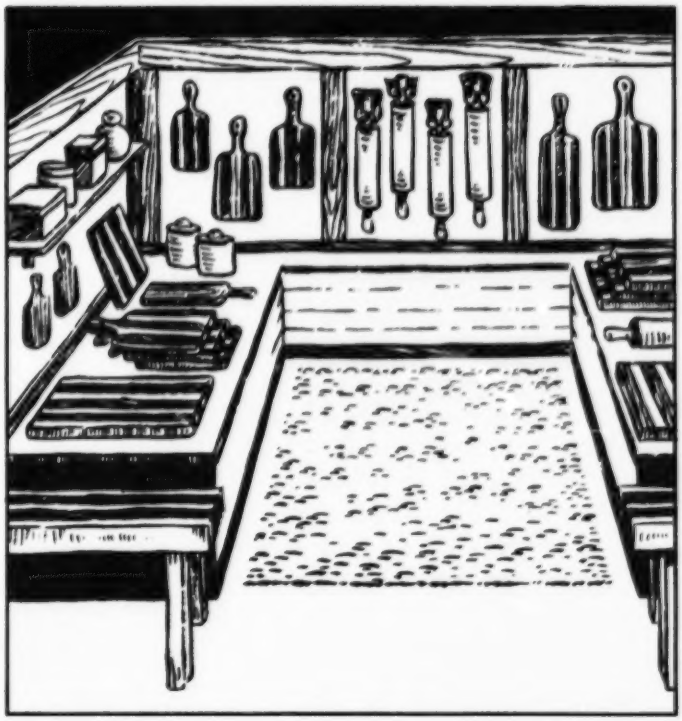
- A draped table located like an island in the exhibit hall.
- A shared exhibit booth of a larger size where you can get together with two or three other producers to complement each other's presentation and save money.
- If the show management will permit them, a "wandering cart" system, where the exhibitor moves around the show selling his or her work.



The modular packing case design achieves several purposes: it creates a number of isolated and stable islands on which to group products of different colours, shapes or uses; it allows each item to be securely packed for travel in a custom sized box; and it provides storage for packing materials and further product samples right within the display area. In this illustration, name labelling is used as an effective design element, the impact of which will be carried in the buyer's mind long after the show is over.

Cylinders in this display may be used for packing and storing display materials. The painted hollow core door supporting two of the cylinders is light, durable and easy to transport. Note the effective use of natural materials both in the reed mat covering to define floor space and the dried flowers and grasses to suggest artistic use of the sale products. The inexpensive overhead lights are made from large juice tins sprayed black.

Displays should be simple and uncluttered, revealing a broad sample of work available. Appropriate products may become part of the booth backdrop, ranging from large woven or quilted items defining whole wall spaces to musical instruments or carved walking sticks decorating simple but sturdy panels. In this illustration, laminated bread boards and rolling pins displayed against painted and natural woodframe modular units suggest an artistic as well as a functional role. The butcher block tables, which help to define the booth entrance, also provide a sturdy surface for demonstrations.



Small items such as jewellery and miniature ceramic sculptures should be displayed as close to eye level as possible, offering a range of display items which may be rotated during the show. Lighting is critical with small items: it should be strong enough to dramatically highlight without being so bright as to create a glare or to overheat, especially where glass cases are used. An ideal exhibit backdrop does not upstage the products it is designed to sell, but rather melts into the background once the customer steps inside the booth.

BUILDING OR RENTING YOUR OWN BOOTH

Some exhibit units are modular, so you may rent as many interlocking pieces as you need on a piece by piece basis. These are highly portable, light and easy to move around. If you are short on ideas, study various simple display props and methods used in department stores, museums, malls and exhibitions you attend.

Unless you are absolutely confident of what you need and you expect to continue participating in future trade shows or similar sales opportunities, it may be a good idea to rent an exhibit or build something very simple in the early stage.

When you have a complete idea of the selling space you wish to develop, then is the time to design and build a full scale portable exhibit. A design consultant is probably a good idea at this point. A general rule of thumb is that it is not worth owning a permanent display of any size unless you plan to enter several shows a year.

When asking a designer or someone other than yourself to create the booth backdrop or the total booth assembly, give them a copy of the show rules, especially those regarding dimensions, height restrictions, electrical, fire and safety codes.
If your product or service does not fit the standard options available for a given show, most exhibit management teams are happy to work with you to design a custom rental unit (for a higher cost, of course). Discuss your situation with them.

Above all, if you decide to design and build your own booth, be sure to do a dry run on setting it up at home well ahead of the trade show. Photograph the completed assembly including the display items intended for unveiling on the first day and take those photos to the show for ready reference during set-up.

Remember to check for any restrictions you need to take into account including such things as:

- dimensions, both back and sides,
- certain construction materials which may not be allowed to be visible, such as metal framing,
- use of fire retardant materials, even for signs and table coverings,
- enclosure of all or part of the booth roof.

SIGNAGE AND GRAPHICS

Very few trade shows allow an exhibitor to have full control over signage. There may even be restrictions on exhibit signs and labels within the booth, so check carefully before proceeding. Don't be surprised at spending several hundred dollars to have a large and complex sign designed and produced. Take care of it, re-use it and the money will be well spent. When designing your signage and graphics:

- Be very clear in your mind what image you wish to present and build that into your graphics.
- Announce what you have to sell, not just the name of your business. Highlight a product or service relating to the show theme.
- If your product is appropriate, use it to make the booth signage itself, for example, fabric art or wood carving would lend itself to this possibility.
- A sign to be viewed from a distance must be clearly visible over the heads of milling crowds, but when that crowd moves into your booth, you must have other eye-catching graphics lower on the wall or on a counter which they can read at closer quarters.
- Keep the information on your signs and captions short and the lettering big enough to make for easy reading. At a trade show there is too much going on to expect people to read a lot of text on the spot. Have handout material to fill that demand.
- Target your signage and graphics to attract specific potential buyers, using a few words to outline what is offered at your booth, who should buy and why. An effective sales staff will take it from there.
- Use illustrations, blown up photographs and charts as part of your graphics, all related directly to the interests of the potential customer and the selling message. Avoid distracting decoration that has no focus on your product.

AUDIO/VISUAL TOOLS

Many people consider using movies, videos or slide shows as sales props. However, this is not advisable in a small booth area where the trade show's other distractions, noise levels and poor lighting for such presentations tend to cancel the effectiveness of these options. In addition, studies indicate that people will only watch a video for thirteen seconds before losing interest and moving on.

If you want to pursue this idea seriously, rent a room from the show management where people can sit with controlled light and sound levels and really benefit from your efforts.

PACKING TIPS

- If the display is being shipped, be mindful of the possible need to protect against moisture or extremes of temperature. Seal specific items in plastic bags if necessary.
- Place larger, heavier items at the bottom of each carton.
- Place flat items, such as paintings or large plates, on edge in the carton, never lying down flat.
- Use boxes within the larger crate to protect small breakables.

B. SHIPPING AND ASSEMBLING YOUR DISPLAY BOOTH

SHIPPING YOUR EXHIBIT

You may ship your booth, supplies, products and demonstration props either directly to the exhibit hall or to the designated booth installation company used by your selected trade show. Either way, make sure every crate is securely packed and labelled with an inventory of what is inside, the total number of crates being shipped, and the assigned booth number.

Some trade shows make it mandatory to use their own contractor for moving materials into the exhibit hall. If this is the case, and if you choose to drive your own items to the unloading bay, have them properly labelled and be prepared for the contractor to handle them from there.

Remember that packing materials will have to be used again after the show, so treat them with care.

Many trade shows will not store cardboard boxes for you during the show but they will store wooden crates or other hard sided containers. If this is the case and you are using cardboard boxes, you will have to make arrangements to store them yourself. With most cardboard containers, it is an easy matter to cut the tape on the bottoms, collapse them and either store them in your hotel room or in your van.

SETTING UP THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

You have gone to a lot of time, effort and expense to plan your participation in this show. Now you can expect everything to run smoothly....right? Wrong! Now is the time when the small things will eat away at your set-up time and sap your energy. Take nothing for granted.

Don't try setting up your whole exhibit just a few hours before the show opens. Working under pressure right down to the wire will take its toll on that first selling day and get you off to a poor start. If possible, set up the afternoon or evening ahead. This will allow you to make unforeseen adjustments in a relaxed manner and arrive for your first event fresh and ready to go. A step by step check list for booth installation is provided in Appendix B.

Even if the show is large enough to have a skilled installation team with every variety of tool, it is better to bring a basic tool kit to have handy for your immediate needs. If the show is small, you will be doing most of the set-up yourself anyway, and a tool and supply box of your own will be mandatory.

It is also important to remember that all that heavy visitor traffic you are hoping for will cause some damage over a period of days and you will have to keep your exhibit area as fresh as possible right to the end of the show.

Apart from a common selection of tools, here are some things you might not think to include:

- Heavy duty extension cords with ground.
- Spare light bulbs for any special lighting you plan to use in your booth (you want to be able to replace them instantly, not wait for the show handyman to turn up).
- A measuring tape.
- Touch-up paint in your exhibit's colours in case part of the package gets damaged in transit or even during the show itself. Heavy felt markers might be enough on some of the graphics.
- A plastic sheet to cover the carpet during set-up.
- Some simple cleaning tools for midday mop-ups and accidents. These may include cleaning cloths and a bottle of spray cleaner plus a small vacuum cleaner.
- Carpet tape to seal down the rug around your exhibit area.
- A staple gun to quickly repair signage and graphics which may be coming loose.

LIGHTING AND ELECTRICAL REQUIREMENTS

These must be viewed not only from an aesthetic point of view but also from the Fire Marshall's point of view. The types of lighting fixtures and extension cords permitted, where they are placed and how the electrical outlets are used are all subject to strict guidelines. If you do not fulfill such requirements, which are usually clearly laid out in your exhibit literature, you may well find your booth closed down. A refund is not likely in this type of situation.

General lighting at trade shows is fairly subdued so as to allow the individual exhibitors to highlight their own booths and products in a more dramatic way. You will be provided with a basic electricity package but it may not be enough for the specific lighting effects you wish to produce. Order any extra wattage you may need prior to your arrival date.

Satisfactory lighting can be a real problem for some displays. If you intend to make shows a regular part of your selling scheme and you need detail lighting to show off certain products, another option is to carry a battery-operated light for a specific display.

BOOTH AND PRODUCT ARRANGEMENT

You want your booth layout and product arrangement to reflect a level of professionalism that will give the buyer confidence in the quality of your operation. There are definite signals that come with the display you choose to arrange. You want to encourage both compliments AND sales! Some points which you will need to consider:

- DON'T arrange your items like an educational exhibit, a museum collection or an art show where people are encouraged not to touch. People must be comfortable getting close to your display, picking up items where it is appropriate and thinking about buying.
- DO be prepared to crowd the inexpensive items a bit but allow more space around your higher priced products.
- DON'T display anything that is damaged. If it is repairable, such as replacement of broken glass for a painting, have it done the first day.
- DO display at different heights, putting your best at an easily spotted level where a buyer does not have to struggle to see it.
- DON'T put out too much at once or the display will become messy and hard to view. You will spend more time putting things back in place and doing other housekeeping jobs than selling from it. Rotate your products or replace as you sell.
- DO keep table coverings and display backgrounds simple but original. They should never overshadow what you are trying to sell. Table coverings, if used, should come neatly down to the floor. It not only looks better, but will hide unsightly storage of cartons and extra supplies under the table.
- DON'T create physical barriers to people circulating through your display area. Barriers send a message about your attitude to potential buyers.
- DO pay attention to security. Costly items must be placed so they are not easily stolen while low cost items can remain within easy handling distance. Glass cases may be a necessity for small expensive items such as jewellery. Normal shoplifting losses during participation in a show or fair are between 5% and 10%, so try to keep the amount to a minimum without developing a fortress mentality.

- DO stand back and look at the exhibit from the visitors' point of view. Where would it be easiest for them to look at or pick up certain promotional items you have prepared for them:
  - your brochure,
  - your business card,
  - a portfolio of your products,
  - a contest or prize giveaway you want them to enter at your booth,
  - a bowl for business cards inviting future contact.

SALES AND OFFICE SUPPLIES

You are setting up a mobile office at the trade show, so be sure to bring along a supply of everything you would use to make sales and run an office on a daily basis. In fact, bring twice the number of order forms and promotional items that you think you will need. A good rule is, if in doubt, take it along. You will probably be in unfamiliar territory where you don't know the stores or they may be closed just when you need a crucial item. Don't keep that eager customer waiting in the wings!

Some items you might not think to include are:

- A complete list of all the invitations you issued and VIP appointments already booked.
- An appointment book for booking longer appointments for prospective customers.
- The Exhibitor's Kit complete with your contract, all order forms you sent in for specific items, and your official exhibitor badges if you were sent them in advance.
- Your receipts for anything shipped by separate carrier.
- Several clipboards to allow you to take notes and write up orders no matter how restricted the display booth.

What should you do if part of your display is lost or damaged in transit?

For most people, the first reaction is to cancel participation in the show they have booked and paid for. However, veteran exhibitors say this is not the only option and, in fact, some have come up with praiseworthy replacements on just a few hours notice.

Unpleasant as this likelihood may seem, do think about what you could do in a pinch, given the nature of your product, what you would have available using the shops in the area, and the professional services available through the show. After all the advance planning and expense, the most costly option may be to go home!

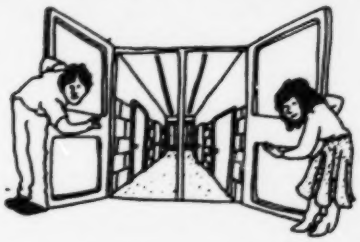
CHAPTER 4: SELLING YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE

This handbook cannot hope to offer a comprehensive course in selling. However, there are many very worthwhile books, articles and courses on the subject with a wealth of information on the psychology of selling and techniques to help you accomplish your selling goals.

While you are first and foremost a creator of ideas and products, you will recognize that the marketing aspect of your business is absolutely critical to its success. In theory, there can be no better individual to represent your business than the person who understands it from the inside out, but it is equally important to be realistic about your ability to communicate effectively and ring up the sales.

If you need help in the area of marketing, the province of British Columbia Ministry of Regional and Economic Development has prepared a "Marketing Workshop" which covers the whole subject in great detail. The workshop, offered province-wide, introduces the home-based entrepreneur to a full range of selling opportunities. If you cannot attend the workshop, a manual on home-based business is also available which may provide some assistance in the area of marketing.

A. RAISING THE CURTAIN



The day has finally come to put all your planning to the test. You have done your homework, now you should expect to see good results. First impressions will open the door to sales but it will be your sensitivity to each situation and to the flow of the crowd that will determine the success of your venture. Be observant and be prepared to modify your battle plan if necessary as you go along.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

As is the case with your booth arrangement, your personal appearance will send an immediate message to the prospective buyer even before he enters your exhibit. Remember that image you have decided upon and make sure you and your staff carry that through to dress and grooming as well.

A professional image should be your goal at all times, but appropriateness to the occasion or product offered for sale will give you a wide range of possible options:

- If your product suggests a certain style of clothing, wear it: perhaps a theme costume, a hat or apron, a lab coat over street clothes if you are demonstrating. Your choice may even be the conversation piece which breaks the ice with customers. Whatever you choose, it should be consistent with the market you are representing. For example, if you are selling outdoor sporting goods, don't wear a three piece suit.

- If what you choose makes you blend in with most of your customers, be sure to wear something to identify you as the sales representative, perhaps a professionally printed logo pin (always worn on the right so as to be visible when shaking hands). This should feature your name in large enough letters so as to be clearly visible. Expect to be more formally dressed than many of your visitors. They like it that way.
- If you can wear a sample of your product — for example, jewellery or clothing — it will provide another good topic of conversation, a walking advertisement! Plan your working samples carefully for maximum showability.

You will be standing and walking around a lot, so always wear older, comfortable shoes. Never break in a new pair of shoes on an occasion such as this. On the other hand, do not wear an old pair of slippers.

STAFF ACTIVITY

All people staffing your booth should have been well briefed in advance about their role in this event, how and when they are to play it. Every person is a sales representative for your product or service and it is, therefore, up to you to see that they have as much preparation for this job as possible.

Each day's start-up staff should be encouraged to check in 15 minutes ahead of the public, or ten minutes before their shift begins during the day so as to be fully briefed and ready to be of service in their role. Some common sense rules you should keep in mind:

- Never eat or drink in the booth. Arrange your staff schedule so that people can get a bite to eat or a coffee when they are on their breaks.
- Never allow your staff to smoke in the booth, it creates a poor impression. It is a sufficiently controversial habit nowadays that many people will not even enter or stay in an area where they see someone smoking.
- If you have enough staff to be able to schedule shifts, ask them to stand or move around while they are on duty in the booth, it gives a better impression. Obviously your staff will need to sit if they are involved in a demonstration or if they are expected to be in the booth for many hours.
- Circulate and be available. Even where the atmosphere is less formal, a person sitting in a corner of the exhibit staring into space or reading a book gives more the impression of a security guard than an interested sales representative.
- Discourage prolonged conversations among staff when they are on duty. You are all there to serve the prospective buyer and must be alert to inquiries. Most people will not interrupt a conversation no matter how casual it appears to be.

B. TARGETING YOUR PRESENTATION

WHOLESALE BUYERS

Many shows cater to groups other than the general public. You must be particularly business-like here while still remaining friendly and courteous. Have your materials such as order forms for future delivery, wholesale price lists and information packages separate from those you would use with the general public.

You will need two sets of materials for shows where you will be selling to both wholesale buyers and the general public. You may find in some shows that wholesale buyers are permitted but the general public is excluded during the first day or two. The general public may then be invited to attend on the last day or so.

It is well worth preparing a separate presentation for both types of buyers. Many exhibitors find that orders from wholesale buyers can provide the bulk of their annual income. However, these buyers are experienced and careful shoppers. They may not buy from an exhibitor the first time around even if they are impressed with the product. It is only when they have seen you at several shows that they may be ready to buy from you. By that time, they will have developed confidence in your ability to deliver a quality product in volume by specified deadlines.

Even if they are interested in a large purchase during their first show contact with you, wholesale buyers will likely shop around all the exhibits for several days, make phone calls to their potential retail purchasers and come back to you only on the last day.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL BUYERS

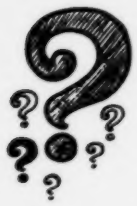
Trade shows and exhibitions are an excellent source of contacts for other professionals as well. You may find retail shop owners or gallery owners will approach you directly to make a variety of suggestions for working through their particular operation.

Sales representatives may offer to include your product in their sales line, opening up new geographical territories for your business. Suppliers representatives may come by to offer you a special price on supplies you require to make your product. Directors of other trade shows, always on the look-out for competent exhibitors, may stop by to invite you to exhibit in their upcoming production.

Always be open to new ways to make sales but ask for time to think them over and check them out if you feel you do not know exactly what you are getting into. Have a specially labelled bowl for business cards from these professionals sitting beside your brochures. Many will leave their card even if they haven't time to stop and discuss opportunities with you at that time. Follow up with a phone call after the show or even during the show if time permits.

THE GENERAL PUBLIC

This is rather a misleading label as there are so many different groups that you could never appeal to more than a selection even if you tried. However, if your show management has advertised appropriately and you have chosen the correct market segment for your product or service, you will find a lot of interested people around your booth.



It is fair to say that the public is less business-like to deal with than the other groups described above. Unfortunately, they are also probably more prone to breaking things or messing up your display. You may find that many such visitors are often less interested in buying than in being entertained by your demonstrations and exhibits or in being educated about your business or product. Expect lots of questions and handle them in a friendly but abbreviated way or you will use up more of your time and energy on educating and entertaining than on selling.

Speaking of educating, if you offer classes as part of your business and you are exhibiting in the local area, you may find this a good time to sign up new students.

C. THE PRESENTATION

ESTABLISHING NEED

Even experienced exhibit people can do with a refresher if they don't use their selling skills more than a few times a year. Visitors have come to your booth because they are interested. The first step in selling is to find out whether the customer has a need for your product or a special problem they have been wrestling with which your product can help to resolve.

Run over these pointers to help you with the opening lines:

- Never open with, "Can I help you?" The natural response to that one is "No"! Start with a comment on the show, the weather, a question about the person's business if he or she is wearing a company badge (this is usually the case with wholesale buyers).
- Be friendly and positive but not pushy or aggressive. Making eye contact and smiling will often be enough of an opening to make the visitor feel at ease and start talking to YOU.
- Even if you are dealing with another customer be alert to anyone in the booth area who might be wanting your attention. Excuse yourself and acknowledge the person, indicating you will be with them soon. If they are not prepared to wait but look like they are serious about talking business, make an appointment time or indicate the times when you are less busy and invite them to return.
- Remember you are there to sell so it is quite legitimate to turn the conversation to the buyer's interest in your product or service within five minutes. If the person is obviously not interested, practice ways of excusing yourself or ending the conversation without sounding rude.
- Personal demonstrations for a specific visitor should be restricted to those who have a serious interest. Demonstrations are time-consuming and draw your attention away from other potential customers.
- If you have exhibited at this show before, a good opener is provided by the display of new products or services highlighted in your booth this year. "Have you seen our latest ....?"

PUTTING ON DEMONSTRATIONS

There are many reasons why demonstrations are an attractive part of your selling presentation. They certainly do draw attention to your booth, they provide an opening topic for your sales approach and they are a good focal point for staff who need to look like they have a purpose besides swooping down on a browsing buyer. Demonstrations are also a way for the seller to reduce some of the nervousness he or she may feel with the direct selling process.

As cautioned in an earlier chapter, watch your sales during and after demonstrations to see if the entertainment and educational interest translates into dollars and cents. Arrange for demonstrations periodically throughout the daily schedule but do not let them become an end in themselves.

Try to arrange to have another staff person on hand to handle sales inquiries during the demonstration: you cannot expect to do both properly at one time. It is also a well known fact that demonstrations are a prime time for shoplifting when booth operator and shoppers are focussing their attention in one area — another good reason to have extra staff members there to watch for such activities.

HANDLING OBJECTIONS

Once you have established the need of the prospective customer, and have made sure that they can afford to buy your product or service, you need to start thinking about how to close the presentation so that they will buy what you have to offer.

Even though you may have helped the customer to discover their need, and you have shown them how your product can fulfill that need, they will not necessarily buy from you. They may be speculating as to how they can get it cheaper, or how they can buy it from a person they can trust. Now comes the critical part where you have to build the customer's confidence in you to the point where they will buy from you rather than from someone else.

It is at this point that the customer's need has turned into a desire to buy. They may feel themselves carried along on the enthusiasm of buying and start to raise objections in an attempt to derail the process. Inertia is an important aspect of selling, and you must not take objections personally, they are simply a tactic to stall and allow the customer to put off making a decision.

The best way to deal with objections is to tune into the type of customer you are dealing with. Some are quite dominant types and it is best simply to make your presentation or invite them to see your demonstration and answer their objections in a business-like manner.

Others are less dominant, and the facts and figures of the demonstration are not as important as their confidence in you. They want your approval and they want to be able to trust you. It is most important to go through the steps of the presentation and invite them to watch the demonstration as well. But it is equally important to help them to voice their objections. Some you can brush aside as being of little consequence. But the prospective customer may repeat others in which case you will have to answer them as fully as possible.

In all cases you impress a customer with your enthusiasm and your credibility. Some points worth considering:

- Have you established clearly that you are an expert?
- Can you answer their objections without reacting emotionally? Can you think of a way of keeping your explanations light and possibly humorous?
- Do you have testimonials and letters of support from satisfied customers? Do you have customer phone numbers which prospective customers can call to substantiate your claims?

D. MAKING THE SALE

At some point the barrage of questions and objections will start to die down and it is clear the client has full confidence in you. Now is the time to ask for the order, but never ask for it directly. Always give your prospective customer choices and alternatives.

There are several ways to "close the sale". Possibly the simplest is just to assume the prospective customer will agree to buy. Have your receipt book and your order book handy. With wholesale clients looking for volume orders you will need to fit them into your production schedule.

THE PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

When you are dealing with wholesale customers, there is often a time lag between the placing of the order and the expected date of delivery. Setting up a clearly laid out schedule book ahead of time is extremely important to your image as a reliable producer. Remember, your wholesale buyer is just as concerned about your reliability as he is about your product line and your prices.

If you do not already have a production schedule book, just buy one of those calendars with large white spaces available for each day of the month. You should have a good idea of how many hours are required to produce, wrap and ship your products, and you simply block out days or weeks in the months ahead.

SAMPLE PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

Production & Shipping Dates	Customer/ Order No	Baskets	Sachets	Plush Toys	Xmas Balls
Sept: Week 1					
Week 2					
Week 3					
Week 4					
Oct: Week 1					
Week 2					
Week 3					
Week 4					

When buyers open negotiations for large future orders, you will be able to see immediately whether you can meet the suggested delivery date just by knowing how much you can produce per day or week, and by seeing how many other orders you are working on during that period. If you are already full for a certain date, say so immediately and offer to book the order for a different date. It is most important not to pretend that you can deliver when you know you can't. Most buyers respect you when you ask their cooperation by offering to book smaller orders over several different delivery dates.

Serious buyers will appreciate your honesty, and even if they end up having to pass up placing an order this time around, they will give you serious consideration in the future. Remember that the key to success is to build a list of satisfied clients.

If a client is not in a great rush to get the shipment, ask them if you can put them to a later shipping date. That way you can keep the earlier days and weeks open for those clients who insist on early shipment dates.

All people working in your booth need to review the production schedule bookings on a daily basis. They must know when you are getting close to filling production spaces for future orders and how to delay potential clients while not discouraging them from their decision to purchase.

CLOSING TECHNIQUES

Some clients may not close so easily, and there are a number of handy techniques for overcoming inertia:

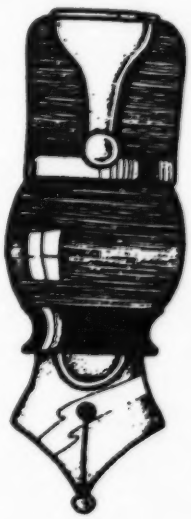
- Let them do the demonstrating, put the items in their hands and let them show you why they are so terrific. As long as you stay out of it, and do not load them down with unnecessary information, they will sell themselves.
- Take two pieces of paper and write all the positives on one and hand the other sheet over to them to let them list all the negatives. Tell them you understand that negatives always weigh more heavily in any decision, but actually seeing all the positives written out can work wonders.

- Overcome inertia by offering a limited time price discount, or show them how your production schedule is filling up rapidly and illustrate why it is important to move quickly.
- Some people are afraid of making a decision in case it is the wrong one. If you have done your job, you will have given them all the facts and figures, and you will have shown them the likely outcomes of their decisions. Just explain that this is the best choice based on the information available.
- If the timing is wrong, offer to write up an order dated for the future, and explain that they can cancel at any time before the due date. You will find that half these orders are cancelled in the future, but the other half will go through without a cancellation.

RETAIL PAYMENT SYSTEMS

You must decide ahead of time which credit cards you are prepared to accept, and whether you will allow people to buy on an installment plan for large items where you will hold and ship after payment is complete. Giving full credit is usually unwise unless you are dealing with a well known wholesale firm, or a tried and true customer from previous experience.

Some retail clients may ask you to do a custom order for them, with a different colour or variation in design or size from your normal product. If you are prepared to do this, ask for a sizable downpayment which will cover your costs in case the buyer decides against the purchase when the custom order is finished. At least then you will not lose money if you cannot find any other person to buy it.



If you are prepared to accept personal cheques, make clear to your staff what types of identification you require. Cheques should be made out by the person whose name and address appear on the front, and should not be postdated.

Always make sure you have plenty of change for cash sales and do not put away your customer's money until you have made change. People will often think they have given you a bill of a larger denomination than in fact they did. Be sure to include sales tax in your calculations if you are selling to the final user of the product.

If you are exhibiting in an area where clients could follow you up after the show, don't hesitate to include a business card and/or a retail price list in the bag with their purchases.

WHOLESALE PAYMENT SYSTEMS

It is in the area of accounts receivable that small businesses reveal one of their greatest weaknesses. Because you are dealing in future production, there is a tendency to forget that it costs money to fill these orders and ship them. However, a carefully thought out plan of dealing with wholesale commitments will keep you on track.

When negotiating with a wholesaler for the first time, it is quite acceptable to ask for a cheque in advance. If the production and shipments are broken up over several months, ask for payment in advance for the first shipment, and accept post-dated cheques for shipments at 30, 60 and 90 day intervals.

At the same time as you take that first order, ask the wholesaler to fill out a credit application so you will be able to extend credit on further orders. Not only does this indicate that you are serious about doing business with them in the future, it will also give you time to check with the Credit Bureau even before you ship the first order.

Be prepared to extend credit to well established buyers, but bear in mind that you will have to spend production money long before you have the opportunity to send out a bill, let alone receive payment. It can be a lean time if you have not planned in advance for the type of financing you will need to carry you through.

Transportation costs are a major crippler if you do not understand the pitfalls that come with the various options. Make sure you and your customer agree on the cheapest and most efficient method of transportation based on either cubic measurement or weight. It can make a big difference, especially if you are shipping wicker furniture!

CHECKING INVENTORY FOR RETAIL SALES

With several people doing shifts in a booth, you may lose track of what has moved as the day goes on. It is, therefore, a good idea to keep an inventory of what is out on display. At the end of each day it will take only a short time to determine what sold (possibly indicating marketing interest in certain areas where you should put more on display), what needs replacing and if anything was stolen. This can then be reported to security staff immediately.

CHAPTER 5: AFTER THE SHOW

A. EXHIBIT REMOVAL

After putting in such a concentrated effort on preparing for and participating in a trade show, there is a natural tendency to relax and get sloppy. Don't let it happen or you will have a few nasty surprises the next time you try to put your show together using some of the same props. Above all, don't leave the exhibit area until you have overseen the packing up and removal of all your crates and props.

Follow a step by step removal routine and check the following:

- Do an inventory of each crate as you pack it.
- Note any damage to your exhibit materials, signage and graphics, and note which crate you put these materials in so you can follow up and repair them before participation in another event.
- If you are using the same crates you brought your items in before the show, be sure to check the return packing labels for clear addresses.
- When the crates are picked up, get shipping documents so you can follow up if anything goes missing.

B. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Every sale made or order taken during the show represents a potential sale in the future. You can build a very effective mailing list by using the names and addresses which you and your staff filled in at the top of each sales receipt.

People who pay by cheque usually have their name and address on the cheque blank, and these names can be added to your mailing list. If the client was happy with the product and has regrets about not making further purchases during the show, your mailing list will provide an invaluable means for keeping in touch so that they can place additional orders.

It is also an opportunity for you to do a promotional mailing six months or a year down the road to people who are already familiar with your business. If they took that all important step of purchasing your product or service once, they are more likely to take it again. It's up to you to remind them to do so.

ON THE HOME FRONT

When you get home from the show, and before you take that much deserved vacation, there are certain things you should plan to do within a few days. It is important to do these before your memory fades and because you want to impress all those potential clients who came to your booth:

- While your thoughts are still fresh, re-write and expand on the notes you made at the show. These may include notes on competitors' exhibits, seminars attended and suggestions made by visitors to your booth.
- Write short thank you notes to anyone who was particularly helpful to you in connection with the show and to those who placed orders during the show, with an indication that their orders are receiving prompt attention.
- Meet with others who helped staff your booth in order to run over the show in relation to what has been accomplished for your business (remember the goals set out in Chapter 1?). If you have attended several shows or fairs, be prepared to compare their sales success and eliminate the less profitable ones.
- Process orders as soon as possible and send out material to all those who expressed an interest in your product by leaving their business cards in your booth bowl.
- Do a complete expense accounting while items are still fresh in your mind.
- Get repairs done on damage to exhibit signage, graphics and materials.
- If you took photographs, send them out for developing. Some may come in handy either for follow-up with clients or in publicity stories and promotional brochures you could develop on your product. A picture of you demonstrating in your booth with crowds of people around will add much to a news release you could send to your local newspaper.

YOUR NEW MARKETING TOOL

You now have at your disposal a carefully planned exhibit for your product or service and a certain amount of expertise on how to make use of it. Don't waste it by storing it away until the next big trade show comes along! There may be country fairs, exhibitions or shopping mall opportunities where all or part of your exhibit materials could be put to good use.

Shopping malls are a particularly cost-efficient business arena, providing an alternative method of getting your product before the public. There are hundreds of malls across Canada where a small business can participate in theme events, co-sponsor a special event or put on a demonstration for a weekend in this high traffic selling forum.

The experience of a trade show demonstrates your understanding of this type of public display marketing, and mall managers will generally be very receptive to well organized small businesses setting up temporary facilities which may attract new customers and provide an added dimension to the mall's activities.

EXHIBITING RESOURCE MATERIALS

Primary Resource

The following book is the outstanding reference for anyone who wants to pursue exhibiting on a serious basis. It contains not only a wealth of information for the novice, but also sections on developing exhibits and marketing techniques at more sophisticated levels of involvement. If you want to market regularly through trade shows and exhibitions, it would be a good idea to have this on your personal reference shelf:

Chapman, E.A., Jr. "Exhibit Marketing: A Survival Guide for Managers." McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987.

Other Reference Books

Brabec, Barbara. "Creative Cash: How to Sell Your Crafts, Needlework, Designs and Know-How." Fisher Publishing, Inc., 1981.

Brabec, Barbara. "Homemade Money." Betterway Publishers, 1984.

Garrison, W.E. "Selling your Handcrafts." Chilton Book Company, 1974.

Holz, Loretta. "How to Sell Your Arts and Crafts." Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977.

Scott, Michael. "The Crafts Business Encyclopedia: Marketing, Management, and Money." Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977.

Simmons, Paula. "The Handspinner's Guide to Selling." Pacific Search Press, 1979.

Tooke, Gerald. "Crafts Are Your Business." Canadian Crafts Council, 1976.

Exhibit Management Planning Guides

Expovision Inc., "Exhibit Planning Guide."

Southex Exhibitions, "Planning Guide."

APPENDIX A. PREPARING FOR JURY SELECTION

For many shows and exhibitions, especially those involving arts and crafts, there is a selection board or "jury" in charge of accepting or rejecting your application for participation. Do not be discouraged by the prospect of rejection: bear in mind that jurying means a higher quality show, likely to attract less sightseers and more serious buyers. Even if you are not accepted this time, your returned submission will likely include suggestions for improvements or alterations which may get you in to this show or another one later on.

Your submission will have to include a sample or samples of your product plus slides to illustrate other aspects of your work. Try putting yourself in the jury's shoes, looking at hundreds of submissions and thousands of slides over a period of a few days, and you will appreciate the importance of a strong presentation!

Here are some suggestions for making a good impression:

- Pack your sample submissions carefully. This will not only ensure they arrive in suitable condition for jurying but will indicate to the panel that you are tuned to serving potential customers in the same manner. Remember that these items have to be sent back to you in the same container, so make it easy for the jury staff.
- Spare no expense in photographing your work. Slides can be used in public relations shows for clubs and schools or converted to prints for your portfolio and other publicity materials to help offset the initial costs.
- If you use live models to demonstrate your work, consider hiring a professional who will know how to react to the camera while displaying the product to best advantage. Always use a model release form.
- Be cautious of presenting more than one item in a slide. It can be done, but detail is often lost and a cluttered look can make a poor impression overall.
- Props may have to be used to support a product or provide a reference point for size or use. If the prop is not necessary to demonstrate the product, crop the photo close so as to show the whole sample but not the prop. Where it is to be included, make sure the prop is not so eye-catching as to distract from the product itself.

- Glass and metal products such as jewellery are often difficult to photograph because of their small size and the reflective qualities. A photographer who thoroughly understands lighting is invaluable here.
- Flat objects of any size are particularly difficult to photograph effectively. Rugs or wall hangings, for example, may need a chair as a reference point to illustrate real size. Many clothing items and hangings can be displayed using wooden dowelling to prevent sagging and folding.

APPENDIX B. BOOTH SET-UP STEP BY STEP

If you follow a set pattern each time you install your exhibit booth, you will not only avoid costly errors but also save time and energy for the main event:

- Inspect your booth location and measure it up to be sure it fits with the specifications mailed to you. If not, you may have to discuss the matter with show management or modify your exhibit package.
- Check to see where electrical outlets are located in your booth. Determine whether you will need to run electrical cables to a specific part of your booth and lay the cable to approximately where you want it to emerge from the carpet.
- Lay your booth carpet and seal down with carpet tape.
- Slit carpet to allow for electrical cable to be pulled through, and cover carpet with plastic sheet to prevent damage during unpacking.
- Unpack and install the basic booth.
- Unpack signs and graphics, and lay out your display.
- Stand back and check your exhibit and graphics for any damage. Touch up where required.
- Dust and clean the exhibit area, removing plastic sheet so as to be able to vacuum carpeted area.
- Lay out printed materials and office supplies.
- Pack up crates, boxes and packing materials in as compact a fashion as possible (preferably one inside the other as size permits) and label clearly with your company name and booth number if these items are to be stored away from your exhibit area.

HOW TO PLAN FOR RESULTS FROM BUSINESS SHOWS

EXHIBITPOWER

AN INFORMATION SERVICE OF SOUTHEX-SMEDMOR SHOWS

Bulletin No. 3

MANAGE YOUR DISPLAY EFFECTIVELY

Paying attention to small details can increase your enjoyment of show participation and help ensure that you get the most effective results from your exhibit. Also remember that your exhibit is competing with every other display in the show for the visitor's attention and it is important that you make it as inviting, as accessible and as interesting as possible.

Here are some tried and proven ideas to help you increase returns from your display:

1. Invite the visitor in by leaving open space. Avoid barricading your exhibit with fencing, flower troughs, decorative rope, ballastrading, desks, etc.
2. Keep your booth staff relaxed and friendly. Avoid high pressure approaches and the spider-fly attitude which might give the prospective visitor the idea that your staff are waiting to pounce.
3. When opening conversation, always approach the prospect face-to-face rather than approaching him from behind.
4. Keep representatives strategically dispersed, in order to avoid giving the booth a deserted appearance.
5. Keep sales staff alert by short, frequent breaks. Plan rest periods on a carefully prepared rotation basis.
6. Keep the booth fully-manned, particularly at lunch times.
7. Brief representatives on show geography, so they are familiar with such items as:
   a) Precise location of information desk
   b) Banking facilities
   c) Telephones
   d) Refreshment areas
   e) Washrooms
   f) Exhibits of associated companies
   g) Taxi Service

Always approach a booth visitor face-to-face and keep him relaxed by avoiding high pressure tactics.

8. Do not let representatives group together, the visitor will not want to break up a private party.
9. When interviewing one visitor, and another comes into the booth, always try to acknowledge him indicating that you will be with him as soon as you are free.
10. Don't let the booth develop into a rest centre. Never let representatives occupy chairs or sit on desks in full view of passing visitors.
11. Don't let representatives stand in positions that may hide booth or hinder entry into the booth.
12. Don't hover near the visitor — approach him pleasantly, positively and politely.
13. Never ignore a visitor. If you do you will never know how much business you have missed.
14. Clearly label all booths and photographs in large size lettering, remembering that the forward show visitor will often be suffering from eye strain and fatigue, and will not want to engage in any activity which requires mental or physical effort.
15. Make sure that completed entry forms are not left lying around in the booth. It has been known that information has been obtained by the competitor because such information was left in open view.
16. Keep the booth tidy at all times and avoid littering with half empty glasses, cups, filled ash trays, newspapers, briefcases, cardboard boxes and shopping bags.

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